

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION AF-04

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EUR-08 NEA-07 NSC-05 NSCE-00

INR-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 SP-02 PRS-01 ACDA-10

L-01 IO-06 /067 W

-----036364 131544Z /45

P R 131030Z JUL 77

FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7778

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

USNAAA/CINCEUR

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 NOUAKCHOTT 1584

LIMDIS

NOFORN

CINCEUR FOR HOTAD

DAKAR AND RABAT ALSO FOR USDAO

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: MOPS, MPOT, MASS, MR, SS

SUBJECT: SAHARA WATCH: AFTERMATH OF JULY 3/ POTISARIO ATTACK ON
NOUAKCHOTT

EF: (A) NOUAKCHOTT 1541, (B) NOUAKCHOTT 1522

1. TOTALLY INEPT HANDLING OF JULY 3 POT SARIO ATTACK ON NOUAKCHOTT
BY MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENT (GIRM) CIVILIAN AND MILITARY AUTHORITIES
AND RESULTING SHARP INTERNAL REGIME AND PUBLIC CRITICISM OF
MANIFEST GOVERNMENTAL INCOMPETENCE HAVE PRODUCED NEW APPRECIATION
OF REALITY THAT MAURITANIA IS NATION AT WAR, RECOGNITION BY
PRESIDENT AND MEMBERS OF NATIONAL POLITICAL BUREAU (BPN) THAT
FUTURE OF REOIM IS AT STAKE AND THEIR PERSONAL NECKS ARE ON
LINE, AND A FUNDAMENTAL RE-ORGANIZATION OF MILITARY/SECURITY
APPARATUS.

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2. NEITHER OAU SUMMIT DELEGATES (INCLUDING PRESIDENT OULD
DADDAH) NOR MEMBERS OF BPN/COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, NOR GENERAL
PUBLIC UNDERSTAND HOW CIVILIAN AND MILITARY AUTHORITIES FAILED
TO LEARN OF, INTERCEPT, AND DESTROY (OR AT LEAST BADLY MAUL)
RP VEHICLE POLISARIO ATTACK FORCE AT SOME POINT DURING ITS
800 KILOMETER TRAVERSE OF MAURITANIA ON ROUTE TO NOUAKCHOTT,
OR WHY CIVILIAN AND MILITARY AUTHORITIES WERE INCAPABLE OF

ATTACKING AND DESTROYING WITHDRAWING POLISARIO FORCE AFTER IT REVEALED ITS LOCATION BY HITTING CAPITAL. NOW GENERALLY ACCEPTED FACT THAT SECURITY/MILITARY BUREAUCRACY KNEW OF POTISARIO "INFILTRATION IN STRENGTH" IN ADVANCE (REPORTS RANGE FROM 5 TO 3" HOURS ADVANCE WARNING; EVIDENCE AVAILABLE TO US SUGGEST 255 COUPLED WITH FAILURE OF CIVILIAN OR MILITARY OFFICIALS TO PLACE MILITARY AND GENDARMERIE UNITS ON ALERT (A) DURING OAU MEETING TO WHICH POLISARIO REPS WERE REFUSED ENTRY, AND (B) ON POTISARIO'S FAVORABLE ATTACK DAY - SUNDAY PLUS FACT THAT ATTACKERS SALVAGED 50-55 ROUNDS FROM 3 KILOMETERS OUTSIDE NOUAKCHOTT AND WITHDREW LEISURELY UP PAVED HIGHWAY TO AKJOUJT HAVE FUELED FIRES OF CRITICISM. AT JULY 6 BPN MEETING, MINISTER INTERNAL SOVEREIGNTY SALAH WAS REPORTEDLY VIGOROUSLY ATTACKED BY ALL HIS PEERS. MEMBERS OF OAU PARTY WHO RETURNED LATE THAT AFTERNOON MADE NO ATTEMPT TO CONCEAL THEIR INDENTITY NOR THEIR SHARP CONDEMNATION OF THEIR CIVILIAN AND MILITARY COLLEAGUES WHO HAD BEEN LEFT BEHIND IN CHARGE. FACT OF SECOND ATTACK ON CAPITAL, OF NUMBER OF SHELLS LOBBED INTO CITY (MORE THAN DOUBT 1976 ATTACK), CLOSER-IN IMPACT POINTS (IMPLYING 2 OR 3 DEEP INSIDE CITY SOME 1200 METERS FROM EDGE OF BUILT-UP AREA) PLUS CIVILIAN DEAD AND INJURED HAVE REPORTEDLY BADLY SHAKEN ORDINARY NOUAKCHOTT RESIDENTS AND HAVE AROUSED SHARP CRITICISM OF GOVERNMENT WHICH IN THEIR EYES IS APPARENTLY INCAPABLE OF PROTECTING THEM.

3. FIRST RESULT OF JULY 3 "MOMENT OF TRUTH" REINFORCED BY JULY 7 ATTACK ON GIRM AMBASSADOR TO FRANCE REPORTED TO BE

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SHARP NEW APPRECIATION ON PART PRESIDENT AND HIS TOP LEVEL COLLEAGUES OF BLEAK REALITY OF SITUATION. FOR FIRST TIME, PRESIDENT NOW UNDERSTANDS (ACCORDING TO FRENCH AMBASSADOR EMOMITTE WHO HAS SEEN OSTD DADDAH AT LEAST TWICE SINCE HIS RETURN FROM LIBREVILLE) THAT MAURITANIA IS INDEED NATION AT WAR FIGHTING FOR ITS VERY EXISTENCE, AND THAT HE MUST TRANSFORM HIMSELF INTO EFFECTIVE WARTIME LEADER DESPITE HIS EARLIER MISGIVINGS AND HIS PREVIOUS UNWILLINGNESS TO FACE UP TO FACT OF WAR AND TO PROSECUTE IT WITH SINGLEMINDED CONCENTRATION. REMOVILLE ET SO REPORTS THAT BPN MEMBERS HAVE AT LAST REALIZED THAT FUTURE OF REGIME IS AT STAKE AND THAT THEIR PERSONAL NECKS ARE ON LINE, THAT THEY EITHER ORGANIZE THEMSELVES AND GIRM TO FIGHT AND MAKE CERTAIN THAT THEY WIN (OR AT LEAST DO NOT LOOSE) OR THEIR POLITICAL FUTURE IS LEADERS OF MAURITANIA IS FINISHED AND THEIR VERY LIVES AT RISK.

4. SECOND RNL IS THOROUGH SHAKE-UP AND REORGANIZATION OF MILITARY/SECURITY APPARATUS. GOVERNMENT HAS MADE NO ANNOUNCEMENT OF WIDE-RANGING DECISIONS MADE JULY 8 OR 9, BUT BROAD LINES BELOW COME FROM REMOVILLE AND INDIRECTLY FROM FOREIGN MINISTER MOUKNASS:

(A) MINISTER STATE SALAH REMAINS IN PLACE BUT "ON PROBATION". HE TOO MAY BE SACKED IN SECOND PHASE OF REORGANIZATION OF

CAPABILITY OF MILITARY/SECURITY STRUCTURE DOES NOT IMPROVE
DRAMATICALLY AND QUICKLY;
(B) MINDEFNESE (COLONEL) MBARECK BOUNA MUKHTAR BECOMES CHIEF
OF STAFF OF ARMED FORCES AS WELL AS MINISTER DEFENSE;
(C) COTONET VIAH OULD MAYOUF, BATTLE PROVEN HERO OF FIRST
EIGHT MONTHS OF OUERILTA WAR AND OF JUNE 1976 DESTRUCTION OF
AL-WALI INVASION FORCE (SEE JEUNE AFRIQUE COVER STORY NUMBER 861
DATED JULY 8) WHO WAS BUTTED OUT OF MILITARY COMMAND STRUCTURE
BY NEVOUS CIVILIAN TEADERS AND THRUST INTO CIVILIAN
JOB AS MINISTER OF CONSTRUCTION, RETURNS TO MILITARY AND TAKES
COMMAND OF TIRIS AL-CHARBIA/NOUADHIBOU SECTOR;
(D) LTC AHMED BOUCE F (ABU-SAYF), CHIEF OF STAFF SINCE SPRING
1976, TAKES COMMAND OF BIR MOGHREIN/ZOUERATE SECTOR;
(E) COTONET MUSTAFA MOULD MUHAMMED SALEK FORMER
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CHIEF OF STAFF
(1970) AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNOR, AND FOR PAST YEAR HEAD OF GIRM BASIC
COMMODITY STABILIZATION ORGANIZATION (SONIMEX5 RETURNS TO ACTIVE DUTY
TO COMMAND ONE OF REORGANIZED AND REVITALIZED MILITARY SECTORS
(PROBABLY ATAR)

NOTE BY OC/T: PARA 1 # AS RECEIVED.

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ACTION AF-04

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EUR-08 NEA-07 NSC-05 NSCE-00
INR-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 SP-02 PRS-01 ACDA-10
L-01 IO-06 /067 W
-----068682 151513Z /42 45

P R 131045Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7779
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
CINCEUR

SECRET SECTION 2 OF 2 NOUAKCHOTT 1584

LIMDIS NORFORN

CORRECTED COPY 12TH LINE PARA NBRD 6

(F) MORE SENIOR, COMPETENT, AND EXPERIENCED COMMANDERS ARE BEING ASSIGNED TO NOUAKCHOTT, TIDJIKDJA, AND NE'MA, COMMAND CENTERS OF OTHER REVITALIZED SECTORS. ACCORDING TO MOUKNASS, NEW NOUAKCHOTT COMMANDER WILL HAVE FORCE OF 2000 MEN DEDICATED SOLELY TO DEFENSE OF CAPITAL.

5. AT SAME TIME, FRENCH ARE BRINGING IN NUMBER OF MILITARY TECHNICANS TO ADVISE AND ASSIST MAURITANIAN MILITARY. REMOVILLE DECLINED TO GIVE ME EXACT NUMBER (I SUSPECT 15 TO 20), BUT DID SAY THAT FRENCH MILITARY MEN WOULD BE ASSIGNED TO ARMED FORCES HEADQUARTERS IN NOUAKCHOTT AND TO SUBORDINATE COMMANDS THEY WILL NOT RPT NOT BE ASSIGNED TO COMBAT UNITS, BUT THEY WILL BE "VERY CLOSE BY". REMOVILLE MATTER-OF-FACTLY DECLARED MAURITANIANS HAVE DECIDED ON AND HOPE TO PURCHASE NUMBER OF U.S. - MANUFACTURED SKYRAIDER AIRCRAFT (IT WAS NOT CLEAR WHETHER SKYRAIDER WAS RECOMMENDE BY MOROCCANS, FRENCH, OR BOTH). NOTING SKYRAIDER
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IS HEAVIER, MORE CAPABLE AIRCRAFT THAN TEE SIX, REMOVILLE URGED USG TO TAKE WHATEVER STEPS ARE REQUIRED TO ENABLE GIRM TO PURCHASE THIS DESPERATELY NEEDED ADDITION TO ITS SIX PLANE AIRFORCE (OR PERHAPS SEVEN IF REUMORED REPLACEMENT FOR TVDEFENDER IS FACT).

6. AT THIS POINT IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PREDICT WHAT IMPACT REGIME'S REPORTED NEW PERCEPTION OF REALITY OR REORGANIZATION OF MILITARY COMMAND STRUCTURE WILL HAVE. INABILITY OF MILITARY TO SUSTAIN STATE OF ALERT, WHICH IS DEEPLY ROOTED IN CULTURAL HERITAGE OF CONSTITUENT ETHNIC GROUPS, AND INEFFECTIVENESS OF MAURITANIANHBUREAUCRACIES --CIVILIAN AND MILITARY-- WHICH IS BOTH FUNCTION OF AND RELECTION OF NATIONS POSITION AT VERY BEGINNING OF MODERNIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT ROAD, SUGGEST PROBLEM LIES MUCH TOO DEEP AND IS FAR TOO COMPLEX FOR QUICK CORRECTION BY SUPERFICIAL REORGANIZATION OF STRUCTURE AND A FEW CHANGES IN CAST. MOREOVER, EVEN IF STRUCTURAL AND PERSONNEL CHANGES PRODUCE SPANKING NEW MILITARY MACHINE OF IMPRESSIVE EFFECTIVENESS, VERY NATURE OF WAR MAURITANIA IS FIGHTING AND CHARACTER OF TERRAIN INVOLVED ACCORD SIGNIFICANT ADVANTAGE TO GEUERILLA ATTACKER. AS FINAL OBSERVATION, ALGERIAN DECISIONS TO SEND POLISARIO AGAINST NOUAKCHOTT (OR AT VERY MINIMUM TO PERMIT POLISARIO TO LAUNCH ATTACK) TOGETHER WITH MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENTAL AND PUBLIC REACTION AND MAURITANIAN/MOROCCAN/FRENCH RESPONSE HAVE PROBABLY PUSHED ANY NEGOTIATED SOLUTION OF SAHARA DISPUTE A COUPLE

OF YEARS OFF INTO FUTURE -- BARRING SOME (UNANTICIPATED)
MAJOR SHIFT IN ALGIERS MATCHED BY A RECIPROCAL RECEPTIVITY
TO RESOLUTION IN RABAT.

HANDYSIDE

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Message Attributes

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TAGS: MOPS, MPOL, MASS, MR, SS, POLISARIO
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